

Story 1528 (1992 Tape 1

Narrator: Mustafa Aytekin, 30

Location: Derinkuyu kaza,
Nevşehir Province

Date:

A Curse Laid by Nasreddin Hoca¹

As Nasreddin Hoca began to grow old, he bought a cane. Wherever he walked, he leaned quite heavily upon this walking stick. When some of his friends wanted to play a practical joke upon the Hoca, they decided to break his cane while he was in the mosque at prayer time.² During the next prayer service, one of them actually did this.

When Nasreddin Hoca had finished his prayers, he came out of the mosque, but he was unable to find his cane at the place where he had left it. Looking around, he discovered that some of his friends were in the mosque yard laughing at him. Then he noticed before them on the ground the pieces of his broken cane. Gazing at the broken cane, the Hoca raised his arms and opened his hands toward heaven. Then he prayed that a curse be placed upon the person who had broken his cane. He said,

¹A hoca is a preacher and the religious leader of a community. In pre-Republican times the hoca was also the community teacher. Separation of church and state in the Republic required that teachers be people of secular rather than of religious training. Nasreddin Hoca is Turkey's most popular comic folk character.

²Although the text does not say so, the implication is that he checked his cane at the door of the mosque at the time he was leaving his shoes there. No one enters a mosque wearing shoes.

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"May whoever broke my cane have his own leg broken after forty days.

Upon hearing this request for a curse, the person who had broken the Hoca's cane became upset and very nervous. He said, "Hoca, I was the one who broke your cane, and now, as a result of that, you have placed upon me a curse which will cause my leg to be broken in forty days."

Yes," answered Nasreddin Hoca. "One of your legs will be broken forty days from now."

When the offender heard this curse repeated, he grew even more nervous. He was not only nervous but also so confused that he paid little attention to where he was walking. Before long his foot became jammed between two stones, causing him to fall and break his leg. Very angry now, he shouted, "Oh, Hoca, you told me that my leg would be broken in forty days, not right away!"

Nasreddin Hoca smiled at him and said, "You must have broken your leg as the result of some earlier curse that had been placed upon you. As a result of my curse, your other leg will be broken in forty days."